

News from Rep. Stephanie Herseth
For Immediate Release
Contact: Russ Levsen

HERSETH TESTIMONY AT BRAC HEARING

June 21, 2005, Rapid City, SD – U.S. Rep. Stephanie Herseth joined Senators Johnson and Thune, Governor Rounds, and other officials to give testimony today before Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commissioners in support of Ellsworth Air Force Base.

During her comments, Rep. Herseth focused on the Base's modern infrastructure, and on its ability to take on future missions in addition to retaining the B-1. She particularly noted that "Ellsworth is the only facility in the region considered suitable for a Global Hawk UAV mission." Herseth further outlined that Ellsworth is also "ready and uniquely capable of accepting the Airborne Laser mission, and the base has the flexibility of accepting emerging missions such as C2ISR, tanker missions and space operations."

Herseth's complete testimony is reprinted below.

Testimony of Representative Stephanie Herseth
June 21, 2005
BRAC Commission Field Hearing, Rapid City

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Commissioners: Thank you very much for your consideration today and in the weeks ahead. As Senator Johnson discussed, and as you undoubtedly noticed in your visit this morning, Ellsworth has been transformed from a base of the past to a modern base of the future. It has served, and can continue to serve, the existing B-1 mission extremely well – a mission that should not be fully consolidated into one location for the reasons Senator Thune and others set forth. And as we in Congress work to transform our nation's military, there is no doubt that Ellsworth is also uniquely positioned to serve as an exceptional facility for emerging missions. You've heard earlier testimony referring to these emerging missions, but allow me to elaborate.

The transformation of the Air Force is already underway, and while we have some good guesses as to what the Air Force will look like in 2025, there is never any absolute certainty about how the military will look in the future or how the strategic environment for our national security may change. Ellsworth is one of the few bases with the viability to accept the emerging missions currently being developed and deployed, and it is well positioned to operate virtually any defense platform conceived by the military in the future.

Because of Ellsworth's existing infrastructure and air quality, the Air Force has already recognized Ellsworth as a base well positioned to handle various emerging missions. And that makes Ellsworth an extremely important asset to our nation's military in the years to come.

For example, the Air Force has already identified Ellsworth as an excellent candidate for an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle mission such as the Predator or Global Hawk. In contrast to the other base in the region recommended by the Pentagon for retention and bed-down of a UAV

mission, Ellsworth was one of the five continental U.S. bases identified by the Air Force's internal alternative identification and evaluation process and the only north central base considered suitable for the initial bed-down of a Global Hawk UAV mission in 2001. Given the Air Force's own recommendations, I submit that the Air Force deviated from the Military Value Criteria by not designating Ellsworth as a base to be retained in the north central continental United States for a UAV mission.

Additionally, the Air Force's own evaluation of Ellsworth's location and infrastructure positions it as a prime candidate to bed-down new missions such as Command & Control, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance or "C2ISR"; Space Operations and Tankers. As Senator Thune mentioned, Ellsworth received one of its highest scores for a tanker mission – a score substantially higher than that received by any of the three bases the Department of Defense recommends to bed tankers. Importantly, Ellsworth also has been surveyed for the bed-down of the Airborne Laser, and its arched hanger, which you saw this morning, capable of housing two 747 sized aircraft makes it a prime candidate for that mission.

In closing, allow me to reiterate that Ellsworth is the only facility in the region considered suitable for a Global Hawk UAV mission. It is also ready and uniquely capable of accepting the Airborne Laser mission, and the base has the flexibility of accepting emerging missions such as C2ISR, tanker missions and space operations. I submit that the Department of Defense – by not adequately considering the emerging mission capability of Ellsworth – engaged in an analysis that resulted in a substantial deviation from the Military Value Criteria. The Secretary's recommendation to close Ellsworth Air Force Base is therefore misguided and should be disapproved. As the commission moves forward, I ask that you review the Air Force's own findings related to the potential of Ellsworth to house both a UAV and airborne laser mission. Those findings reflect what those of us familiar with the base already know – and hopefully you've come to know in your visit and through testimony here today: it is a world class, modern facility well positioned to handle emerging missions in the decades to come, and to help meet our national defense needs in an ever-changing strategic environment.

Thank you again for your consideration.

###